

WHAT'S *New*

in the Metropolitan Police Department



*A weekly update for residents, visitors,
and workers in the District of Columbia*

Friday, June 25, 2004

TOUGH NEW RESTRICTIONS ON MOBILE PHONE USE WHILE DRIVING GO INTO EFFECT IN DC JULY 1

Beginning July 1, it is illegal for motorists to use mobile telephones or other electronic devices while driving in DC, unless the phones or devices are equipped with a hands-free accessory. During the first month, however, MPDC officers will be issuing warnings only, as part of an effort to educate drivers about the new traffic safety law. The "Distracted Driving Safety Act of 2004" prohibits drivers from using a mobile telephone, hand-held computer, pager or other electronic device while operating a moving motor vehicle in the District, except when the phone or device is equipped with a hands-free accessory. Violations of the law carry a \$100 fine. However, first-time violators can have the fine suspended by providing proof of having acquired a hands-free accessory prior to the imposition of the fine. The law does provide exceptions for the emergency use of a mobile phone while driving, including calls to 9-1-1 and 3-1-1. School bus drivers and individuals holding a learner's permit are prohibited from using any mobile telephone or other electronic device, even if it is equipped with a hands-free accessory, unless they are making an emergency call.

- ① Read the news release at:
<http://mpdc.dc.gov/news/news.asp?sid=2757>
- ① A fact sheet containing details on the new Distracted Driving Safety Act is available at:
<http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/traffic/distracteddriver.shtm>
- ① View the complete text of the new law (in PDF) on the DC Council's website:
<http://www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us/images/00001/20040113120047.pdf>

MPDC TO ASSIST WITH JULY 4TH CELEBRATION ON THE MALL; NEIGHBORHOOD PATROLS TO FOCUS ON FIREWORKS, DRUNK DRIVING

Again this year, the MPDC is assisting with security for the July 4th celebration on the National Mall. While the US Park Police is the lead agency, the MPDC is providing officers and other logistical support for the operation. For example, the MPDC is activating its network of 14 Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras to support crowd management and help monitor for any suspicious activity in and around the Mall. In addition, a number of street closings are likely to occur in conjunction with the fireworks display. Chief Ramsey emphasized that the MPDC's assistance with this downtown event will not impact neighborhood patrols over the weekend. By restricting leave and adjusting schedules, the Department will fully staff its police districts and Police Service Areas. Neighborhood patrol officers will be paying special attention to the use of dangerous and illegal fireworks, illegal gun use, drunk driving and other street crimes.

- ① For information on fireworks in DC—including a listing of what's legal and what's not—go to:
<http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/season/fireworks.shtm>
- ① Background information on the MPDC's CCTV system can be found at:
<http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/comm/CCTV.shtm>
- ① July 4th revelers who have had too much to drink can get a free cab ride home courtesy of the SoberRide program. Details at:
<http://www.soberride.com>

FEDERAL AGENTS TO HELP COMBAT VIOLENCE THIS SUMMER IN DC

DC is one of 15 urban areas across the country that will be receiving extra assistance from the federal government this summer in combating hard-core criminals and pockets of gun violence. US Attorney General John Ashcroft announced this week that various agents and officers from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Drug Enforcement Administration and US Marshals Service are being diverted from other assignments to work with the MPDC and law enforcement in Northern Virginia on fighting gun-related violence. In DC, the additional resources will initially be focused on areas of the 3rd and 4th police districts that have experienced spikes in violence. The federal agents will be part of Violent Crime Impact Teams that will analyze patterns of violence, identify hard-core criminals, and assist in their apprehension and prosecution. The MPDC has already seized approximately 1,000 illegal firearms this year—a number the Department hopes to increase with the additional federal assistance.

SEVENTEEN NEW OFFICERS JOIN NEIGHBORHOOD PATROLS IN DC

Chief Ramsey on Friday swore in the MPDC's 17 newest police officers—members of Recruit Class 2003-6. The officers recently completed approximately 24 weeks of academic, physical and tactical training, and received their badges during graduation ceremonies at the US Department of Interior in Northwest. The new officers will be detailed to one of the seven police districts, where they will be assigned to Police Service Area patrols. In his graduation remarks, Chief Ramsey reminded the new officers that while the MPDC has a unique role in handling national events such as the recent state funeral for President Reagan, the Department's number one priority will always be neighborhood safety. "As new police officers, all of you now possess a unique opportunity to 'do something' about the problem of crime and violence in DC," the Chief said. The newest officers are part of the MPDC's ongoing efforts to enhance police services in DC neighborhoods by increasing its ranks to 3,800 sworn members.

NEWS & NOTES

Mayor Signs Public Safety Reform Law. Mayor Williams this week signed a new law aimed at getting more police officers on the street by giving the MPDC more flexibility in some personnel actions. Among other reforms, the Omnibus Public Safety Agency Reform Amendment Act of 2004 limits the time that police officers can be on a limited-duty status before either returning to active status or being retired. MPDC officials have long complained that the Department's ability to put more officers in neighborhood patrols has been negatively impacted by a high number of officers—up to 10 percent of the force—who are unavailable for full duty for long periods of time. Read the full text of the law (in PDF) at <http://www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us/images/00001/20040615094322.pdf>.

Summer Curfew Hours Begin July 1. A reminder to young people and their families: from July 1–August 31, DC's curfew for persons under the age of 17 begins at 12:01 am, and continues until 6 am, every day of the week. During the other 10 months of the year, the curfew begins at 11 pm, Sunday through Thursday nights, and at 12:01 am on weekends. Get details on DC's curfew at <http://mpdc.dc.gov/info/family/curfew.shtm>.

40 Days of Increased Peace. With the goal of providing young people with positive activities this summer—and keeping them out of trouble—the MPDC, East of the River Clergy-Police-Community Partnership and other agencies are teaming up for the 4th Annual "40 Days of Increased Peace" celebration. Events will run daily in Police Districts 6 and 7 from June 25 through August 3. All other police districts are hosting summer events for youth as well (contact your local police district for details). For details on "40 Days," go to <http://mpdc.dc.gov/news/news.asp?sid=2758>.

Ask the Chief on July 1. Chief Ramsey discusses public safety issues and takes phone calls and e-mails from the community during "Ask the Chief" on WTOP 1500-AM, Thursday, July 1, from 10-11 am.

- ① Know someone who is interested in becoming a sworn member of the MPDC? Get details, including an online application form, at: <http://mpdc.dc.gov/about/employ/officer.shtm>

DATA BOX

Homicides (as of 6/25/04)

- 2004: 88
- 2003: 121
- % Change: -27.3%

Closure Rate: 56.8% (50 closures)

Adult Arrests (week end. 6/19/04)

- Total: 1,132
- Drugs: 181
- Weapons: 23
- Motor Vehicle Theft: 23
- Prostitution/Sex Offenses: 61

Firearm Recoveries (as of 6/23/04)

- June: 131
- 2004 Total: 998

Traffic Fatalities (as of 6/25/04)

- 2004: 26
- 2003: 30
- % Change: -13.3%

Information, ideas, or comments about this service? Send an e-mail to **KEVIN MORISON**, MPDC's Director of Corporate Communications, at kevin.morison@dc.gov. Would you like to have this information e-mailed to you? Just go to our Website and register with **Crimereports.com**.

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